

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SCUL, DM, PGOV, PINT

SUBJ: BENIN NATIONAL CULTURAL FESTIVAL: CULTURE AS A TOOL OF
THE REVOLUTION

1. AS PART OF EFFORT TO SPREAD THE "REVOLUTION" THROUGHOUT ALL ELEMENTS OF THE POPULATION OF BENIN, THE KEREKOU GOVERNMENT HAS ORGANIZED A TEN-DAY "GREAT NATIONAL CULTURAL FESTIVAL" CONSISTING OF DANCES, MUSIC AND DISPLAYS OF ARTIFACTS INTENDED TO BE REPRESENTATIVE OF BENIN'S SIX PROVINCES. AT OPENING CEREMONIES AUGUST 27, BENIN PRESIDENT KEREKOU CALLED FOR END TO "CULTURAL ALIENATION" AND STATED THAT FESTIVAL WAS INTENDED TO BRING TO LIFE "AUTHENTIC SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF THE WORKING MASSES" AND TO GIVE EXPRESSION TO "ASPIRATIONS OF OUR REVOLUTIONARY PEOPLE". KEREKOU SAID PURPOSE OF FESTIVAL WAS TO ALLOW MASSES TO REVEAL THEIR CREATIVE SPIRIT WITH COMPLETE AUTHENTICITY", IN CONTRAST TO PREVIOUS "STEREOTYPED AND DEVITALIZED" EVENTS ORGANIZED BY COLONISTS TO SATISFY A "VILE CURIOSITY FOR EXOCITICISM" AND DESIGNED TO REDUCE NATION'S CULTURE TO "CARICATURE AND CARNIVAL FORMS."

2. COMMENT: KEREKOU GOVERNMENT OBVIOUSLY ATTACHES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO FESTIVAL, TO WHICH CHIEFS OF RESIDENT DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS INVITED. PURPOSE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN TO DEMONSTRATE DEGREE TO WHICH REVOLUTION BEING CHanneled INTO TRADITIONAL ART AND DANCE FORMS. FOLLOWING FORMULA SUCCESSFULLY USED IN OTHER "REVOLUTIONARY" COUNTRIES, MARXIST AND ANTI-"IMPERIALIST"

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SLOGAMS HAVE BEEN INSERTED INTO TRADITIONAL MUSIC AND DANCE

FORMS. LITANY OF CATCHWORDS IN BENIN'S REVOLUTI
QARY RHETORIC
LENDING ITSELF NICELY TO TRADITIONAL CHANTS, AND WAS TAKEN UP
ENTHUSIASTICALLY ESPECIALLY BY YOUNGER PERFORMERS. SINCE MUSIC
AND DANCE PLAY SUCH AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE LIVES OF PEOPLE
HERE, GOVERNMENT MAY INDEED HAVE POTENTIALLY EFFECTIVE VEHICLE
FOR IMPLANTING THE "REVOLUTION".
THOMPSON

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